

**Department of Transportation  
Project No. 102-269  
Reconstruction of the Routes 7 and 15 Interchange and Route 15 and Main  
Avenue Interchange  
Norwalk**

**November 18, 2008 7:00 PM  
Norwalk City Hall**

**Minutes**

**Present:**

ConnDOT:

Thomas Harley  
Richard Armstrong  
Andy Fesenmeyer  
Jennifer Sweeney

Purcell Associates:

Jeffrey Koerner  
Michael Fisher  
Steve Ulman

LADA:

Terri-Ann Hahn  
Chris Korbel

Stakeholders and Members of the Public:

Mary Anne Case - Resident  
Joanne Ferrara -Resident  
Douglas Hempstead - City of Norwalk  
Jo-Anne Horvath -Resident  
Linda Hoza - CT Forest and Park Association  
Alan Kibbe - Silvermine Community Assoc.  
Alex Modica - NASH  
Mike Mushak - Resident  
David Olson - Silvermine Community Assoc.  
Keith Simpson - Merritt Parkway Conservancy  
Jill Smyth – Merritt Parkway Conservancy  
Sara daSilva - Norwalk River Watershed Association  
Dan Landau – Norwalk River Valley Trail  
Sue Prosi – SWRPA  
Ray Rauth – CT Bike Coalition  
Kelly Stranti - Norwalk Common Council  
Linda Hartzler – Silvermine Resident  
Jim Hartzler – Silvermine Resident  
C.W. Swarr – Resident  
Marie Grasso – Resident  
Vincent Grasso – Resident  
Peter Libre – Resident

#### Stakeholders and Members of the Public:

Pavel Gurvich – Resident  
Susan Beyman – Silvermine Resident  
Alan McLean – Silvermine Resident  
Robert Milman – Silvermine Resident  
Mary Lavins – Silvermine Resident  
Lucia Molinelli - Silvermine Resident  
Bob Duff – State Senator  
Nancy Meany – Silvermine Resident  
Timothy Snyder – FHWA  
Marcia Kibbe – Silvermine Resident

#### **Presentation:**

In response to the group's request at the last meeting, Mr. Jeff Koerner presented a chart comparing Alternate #12A, the Cloverleaf alternate w/ option D2, and Alternate #21. Each alternate was assigned a ranking or score for 20 of the top issues previously expressed by the public and ranked by the Stakeholders. Colors were used to clarify the positive aspects of each alternate. For each issue, green was used to designate the best alternate, yellow for a fair alternate and red for the least favorable alternate. The most favorable alternate based on this chart is Alternate #21. In general Alternate #21 addresses a majority of the most important issues as ranked by a survey of the Stakeholders. It was stressed that this comparison was only for the 3 current alternates and is subjective in nature as few of the issues can be easily addressed quantitatively.

A simpler comparison chart of the three alternates was presented which reveals that the Cloverleaf Alternate is the least expensive with a similar estimated wetland impact as Alternate #21 while affecting 4 historic bridges and having the least impact to the Parkway visually. The projected construction cost for Alternate #21 and #12A are approximately 45% more than the Cloverleaf alternate. Alternate #21 will affect 3 historic bridges with some impacts to the Parkway visually. Alternate #12A had the most impact in this comparison.

In October 2008 the wetland areas within the project limits were reflagged by a soil scientist. A comparison between the new wetland areas and the wetland areas as determined in the spring of 1995 was displayed. Most areas were similar with the exception of two relatively small wetland areas in the northwest quadrant of the interchange. These two small pockets of marginal wetlands as determined in 1995 were no longer considered to be wetlands based on the investigation of the soil scientist.

#### **Public Comments and Questions:**

- A question was posed regarding application of the chart to the Creeping Hemlock neighborhood. Mr. Koerner stated that due to the lack of Rights

of Way and the relative location of the neighborhood to the Parkway some impacts are unavoidable. It was also stated by Mr. Koerner that in all alternates the Creeping Hemlock neighborhood will most likely be most impacted due to its existing proximity to the Parkway. Noise mitigation would have to be further investigated during the design phase of the project.

- A question was raised regarding the alternate with no weaves that was included in the September 16 meeting handout. Mr. Armstrong stated that Alternate 23, while there are no weaves, has several very negative aspects such as the construction cost and visual impacts to the Parkway.
- A question was asked regarding the location of the proposed bike path and where it was located relative the bridge over the Norwalk River. Mr. Koerner stated that the bike path would be adjacent to the ramp and would be carried on the same bridge over the Norwalk River. Questioning continued regarding the additional cost bike path over the bridge and the proposed grades of the bike path. Mr. Koerner stated that the additional cost to carry a bike path over the bridge would be relatively low as the loading for bike traffic is significantly less than vehicular traffic. The grade of the bike path will be similar to the grade of the ramp which is 4-6%.
- In response to a question, it was explained that wetland impacts include the indirect impacts of the shading from new or widened bridges.
- A comment was made questioning how the wetland located North of the Parkway and east of Perry Avenue could be delineated smaller as it is a pond. (After the meeting a review of the wetlands was conducted. There are two wetland systems in the vicinity of this location. The northerly of these two systems is in fact a pond and the two delineations are very similar. The wetland system to the south is the one that was delineated smaller in the fall of 2008.)
- The DOT agreed to make available a copy of the wetlands functional assessment.
- A Concern was raised regarding construction north of Perry Avenue and how runoff might affect septic systems and wet basements. It was noted that current design standards as they relate to drainage design are much more stringent today that they were when the original Route 7 interchange was constructed. The drainage design for the project will be reviewed as a condition of the CT DEP Inland Wetland Permit and the Project will also require registration under the CT DEP Stormwater and Dewatering Wastewaters from Construction Activities.

- A question was asked what the total area of Wetlands delineated versus the total area of the project was. ( After the meeting the total land area of within the CT DOT Right of Way was measured as 150 acres and the area of all Wetland systems delineated was measured as 16.9 acres)

Ms. Terri-Ann Hahn then presented a series of 9 photo renderings of Alternate #21 and compared them with identical photos of the existing conditions. 5 views are along the parkway looking east, 3 views are of the Parkway looking west and one view is looking north on Main Avenue at the Merritt Parkway Bridge.

### **Public Comments and Questions:**

- A comment was made that substantial planting plan should be included in the final design of the project. Ms. Hahn stated that future trees were not added to the renderings so that the proposed improvements were visible. Many areas are available for future plantings which will be incorporated into a landscaping plan as the design progresses. Those mature trees that appear in the photo renderings should be untouched by the construction activities.
- A question was posed about how snow will be removed along ramps that will be confined by parapets. Mr. Koerner responded that snow would be removed in much the same way as on the Parkway itself where there is an adjacent barrier along the shoulder the snow plow would “throw”
- A request was made for the signage of Route 15 to reference the “Merritt Parkway” and for “No Truck” signs to be included as well.
- A question was posed if the Merritt Parkway barrier could be stained or impregnated with an earth tone color to soften the visual of the barrier.
- Many of the views have incorporated the proposed building along Glover Avenue into the views. A comment was made if there were any regulations limiting the height of buildings in the vicinity of the Parkway. In response it was explained that the parkway’s historic status does not limit development outside of the parkway’s right-of-way.
- A question was posed regarding the elevation of the proposed Ramps from Route 7 to the Parkway northbound as it passes over the Norwalk River. Mr. Koerner responded that the ramps had been laid out as an extension of the Merritt Parkway grade and will not be higher than the Parkway.
- A comment was made that the close up views of the proposed plan seemed to show more distance between the proposed ramps and the Merritt Parkway. Mr. Koerner responded that the plans views did need to be updated to match more closely the width of proposed pavement including anticipated shoulder widths instead of just the narrower travel paths. The plans will be modified prior to the next meeting.
- A request was made for additional photo renderings looking from the adjacent neighborhoods. All the proposed views show impacts to the

Parkway as viewed from the Parkway.

- A question was asked about the schedule of the project. Mr. Armstrong stated that a best case scenario would be a start of construction in 2012 with a 3 year construction time.
- A question was asked about the proposed traffic control at the end of the ramp leading to Creeping Hemlock. Mr. Koerner stated that the intersection at the end of the ramp will be controlled by a traffic signal.
- It was recommended that the ramp to Creeping Hemlock be lit with street lighting and that it be full cut-off fixtures. It is state law that new lighting on state projects be compliant with the dark skies initiative which includes full cut-off
- A question was directed to the capacity of the off ramp at Creeping Hemlock. It was stated that the stacking of vehicles at the traffic signal for the projected 2030 volumes was the determining factor in the length of the off ramp.
- A question was posed regarding the added width of the Merritt at the off-ramp. Mr. Koerner stated that the added width of pavement will be approximately 32' to accommodate 2 travel lanes (24') and 2 shoulders (8').
- A question was posed regarding the elevation of the proposed ramps adjacent to the parkway. Mr. Koerner explained that the ramp elevations would be no higher than the existing Parkway. The ramp elevations are based on an extension of the existing Merritt Parkway and the elevation of the Parkway is not proposed to be changed. There are proposed ramps that will span Route 7 North and South of the Parkway but those ramps are 600' +/- from the Parkway.
- It was stated that in the event of a broken down vehicle on any ramp there will be enough room for vehicles to by-pass the stopped vehicle. Mr. Koerner responded that all ramps will be designed to accommodate by pass.
- It was stated that Main Ave. under the Merritt Parkway will be 6 lanes wide with 4' shoulders. The Parkway over Main Avenue will remain as two separate structures with an opening in the median.
- A request was made to remove the overhead utility lines and poles crossing the Merritt Parkway along Main Ave. Crossing underground is preferred for aesthetic reasons.
- A request was made for a wider sidewalk along Main Ave. under the Merritt Parkway Bridge for the purpose of accommodating bike traffic as well as pedestrians.
- A request was made that a similar treatment be used on the Perry Ave. Bridge as is proposed for the Main St. Bridge. Mr. Harley stated that something could be done to enhance the look of the affected bridge. However he did say it would not be real stone as is shown on the proposed Main Avenue Bridge.
- A comment was made that in addition to the photo representations of the proposed conditions a model of the entire project should be made. Mr.

- Harley stated that the creation of a model would be cost prohibitive.
- A number of people in the audience were interested in future views from their respective neighborhoods. Mr. Armstrong committed to providing a number of photo renderings for a meeting in January for the general public. The stakeholder group will be sent the proposed locations of the views prior to development of the photo renderings.

**Conclusion:**

A consensus that Alternate #21 was the preferred alternate was reached.

Mr. Armstrong restated that the original purpose of the stakeholders' meetings was to thoroughly explore the project issues with the hope and expectation that the group would reflect the perspective of the greater public. With that in mind, the next step is to conduct a larger public meeting to present the results of the group's effort.

Mr. Harley requested that if the next meeting on this project were to be a General Public Information Meeting to be held sometime in January 2009, that it could be advertised as the presentation of preferred Alternate 21 as developed by CT DOT and the entire Stakeholder Group. All agreed.

Mr. Harley further discussed the need to follow the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process to develop an environmental assessment document for this project. This document will compare alternates and their environmental and socio-economic impacts to the area. It is conceivable, however unlikely, that Alternate 21 would not be the least environmentally prudent alternative that meets the purpose and need for this project. It was pointed out that the environmental document phase includes public involvement opportunities.

Mr. Armstrong stated that CT DOT would like to continue to work with the stakeholder group as the project further develops, especially with respect to the bike/pedestrian issues; the landscaping; aesthetic issues such as the architectural treatments on structures and walls; illumination; and any other issues of concern to the public.

For a Public Information Meeting to be held in January 2009 CT DOT will develop the following:

- Updated plan graphics of Alternate 21 depicting lane and shoulder widths of new ramps and the existing parkway.
- Generate photo renderings of the project from the Creeping Hemlock and Silvermine near Perry Avenue Neighborhoods along enhanced treatment of the Ramps over Perry Avenue. Update one or two views already

presented to include landscaping.

- Develop a summary document of the Stakeholder process that developed preferred Alternate 21. Included in this document will be an outline of the next steps and the NEPA process.
- Get prints of the photo renderings to stakeholders for discussion with the community.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 PM